EXAMINER'S AMENDMENT

Applicants' response to the last Office Action, filed on December 11th, 2008 has been

entered and made of record.

1.   An examiner's amendment to the record appears below. Should the changes and/or

additions be unacceptable to applicant, an amendment may be filed as provided by 37 CFR

1.312. To ensure consideration of such an amendment, it MUST be submitted no later than the

payment of the issue fee.

Authorization for this examiner's amendment was given in a telephone interview with

Michael Monaco (Reg. 52041) on 12/15/2008.

The amended application received on 12/11/2008 has been amended as follows:

- Claim 1 has been amended to overcome the 35 USC 101 "tied-to" issue by adding

  the phrase "using a processor to perform the steps of" to a new line of the claim

  immediately following the preamble.

Claim 1: A method of segmenting an image of pixels into a number of fields corresponding to

lay-out elements of the image, the pixels having a value representing an intensity and/or color of

a picture element, the method comprising:

using a processor to perform the steps of:

constructing a graph having vertices and edges connecting the vertices, on the based of background areas in the image, said graph edges corresponding to field separators that together delineate the fields of the image;

constructing a list of contiguous shortest cycles that together completely cover at least apart of the image, a shortest cycle being defined as a closed path from a vertex back to that same vertex via the edges of the graph, that has the lowest sum of weights of edge of all possible closed paths from said vertex tack to said vertex; and

defining the shortest cycles of the list as the fields of the image, wherein said step of defining comprises:

determining an enclosed area for each shortest cycle in the list of shortest cycles, and

sorting the list of shortest cycles based on the size of the enclosed area,

wherein any further processing of the image is performed successively on fields corresponding to the shortest cycles in the order of the sorted list.

2.   The following is an examiner's statement of reasons for allowance: Applicant amended the claims to include subject matter previously indicated as allowable.

Any comments considered necessary by applicant must be submitted no later than the payment of the issue fee and, to avoid processing delays, should preferably accompany the issue fee. Such submissions should be clearly labeled "Comments on Statement of Reasons for Allowance."

Contact Information

3.   Any inquiry concerning this communication or earlier communications from the

examiner should be directed to NATHAN BLOOM whose telephone number is (571)272-9321.

The examiner can normally be reached on 10AM-6:30PM.

If attempts to reach the examiner by telephone are unsuccessful, the examiner's

supervisor, Matthew Bella can be reached on 571-272-7778. The fax phone number for the

organization where this application or proceeding is assigned is 571-273-8300.

Information regarding the status of an application may be obtained from the Patent Application

Information Retrieval (PAIR) system. Status information for published applications may be

obtained from either Private PAIR or Public PAIR. Status information for unpublished

applications is available through Private PAIR only. For more information about the PAIR

system, see http://pair-direct.uspto.gov. Should you have questions on access to the Private PAIR

system, contact the Electronic Business Center (EBC) at 866-217-9197 (toll-free). If you would

like assistance from a USPTO Customer Service Representative or access to the automated

information system, call 800-786-9199 (IN USA OR CANADA) or 571-272-1000.

/Matthew C Bella/

Supervisory Patent Examiner, Art Unit 2624